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THE
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

To the Proprietors of the Belfast Magazine.

ON commencing to read the paper in your last number on party spirit, signed "An Observer," I thought at least the title and introductory remarks promised well; for I also am a decided opponent to the faction of party. I dislike all violence, on any side, and do not think that the very best ends will justify dishonourable means. Yet this is an error too common among controversialists, who often support the cause they advocate without being strictly scrupulous about the means they employ. I, equally with the writer, disapprove of intemperate language, but I make a great difference between violence and firmness of language and conduct.

I had not read much of Observer's letter, till I perceived that he was one of the numerous fashionable political sect, who confine their ideas of moderation to one side exclusively. They condemn all strong language, how much soever the use of it may be sanctioned by truth and justice. Trimmers themselves, and unwilling to offend any, they attempt to reduce all to their own standard, very far below proof spirit. Mounted on their censorian chairs, they deal in censure on all who are not as timid and time-serving as themselves. Affectionately moderate, they condemn those who with an honest zeal, undauntedly speak bold truths, and with the true cant of the sect, condemn all at-

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tempts of this nature, lest a too loud or too earnest a tone, shou'd in an uncourtly manner disturb the prevailing indifference of the times. But their partiality is evident, for while they strongly censure one side, they are very tender towards the other, either totally passing by the impropriety of their conduct, or expressing a slight and undefined censure. They gently rebuke Orangemen, but most probably have not signed the petition to parliament against their proceedings. They admit in words the claims of the Catholics, but they eagerly catch at every impropriety, and in many instances at only the appearance of impropriety, and severely blame them, in a style very different from the tolerance conceded to their opponents. To the failings of one side they are disposed to be blind; but by no means so to the errors of the other. "Call ye this, backing your friends," or strict impartiality?

Many are the contrivances to hide a man's apostacy, even from himself, when he is inclined to go with the general current. Observer, with partial views, condemns the Catholics for injuring their cause by their violence, which he says has prevented some of their former best friends from coming again forward in their support. He may be usefully employed in exerting his knowledge of himself to ascertain whether the fault lie in himself or in the reprobated violence of the Catholics. "The many respectable individuals representing the landed interest of

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several large and populous counties," or in other terms, Grand Jurors, are supposed by the writer to have been forced into a change of sentiment from the violence of the Catholic Board. If he had looked a little deeper, and if "his visual nerve had been purged with euphrasy and rue," he might have perceived how little reliance can be placed on the independence of the landed interest, which almost always bends in subserviency to the supposed views of government. In 1792 grand juries spoke as strongly against Catholics, and with the same pretence against their violence, while they were shewing their own. The present year affords a duplicate of their former conduct in terms rather fainter; and yet in 1793, when the elective franchise was granted to Catholics they prudently refrained from redeeming their pledge of lives and fortunes in support of Protestant ascendancy. It may be fairly asked, if this array of the Protestant Boards of grand juries against the Catholic Board, arises from the errors of "Catholic demagogues" or the sycophancy or prejudices of "Protestant monopolists." The Catholic Board have proved themselves friends to peace and regularity. Their address of last year, and their renewed one of this year, prove that their strenuous exertions have not been wanting to repress the outrages of the Thrashers, with whom it would be the greatest degree of injustice in the smallest degree to implicate them. In the cant of moderation there are always motives to run with the crowd; and lukewarm suspicious friends readily frame excuses to turn with the times. The grovelling spirit of affected moderation, the base counterfeit of a superiority to party-spirit, and of a gross partiality, under a mask of im-

partiality, characterizes the present era, and forms a stigma on the age.

The newspaper press in Ulster has for several years largely and disgracefully participated in the partiality complained of. Some editors have consistently kept on the side of power. Let them follow their vocation. They cannot be charged with inconsistency, or with vaunting their own praises for impartiality; but others, equally reprehensible, chant their impartiality and moderation, while they watch every opportunity of censuring one side, but preserve the cautious silence of servility in blaming the actions of the other. They complain of the disinterment of Quail, and hint that the injured are too ready to complain; but say nothing of the provocation of a hostile procession, which led to it. They reprobate the attack on the Dutch sailors in Belfast, but fail in holding an even balance in condemning the insignia of party exhibited at the Excise Office in the same town. The Newry Telegraph pretends friendship to the Catholics, but the value of that friendship may be estimated by the lukewarm suspicious support of their cause, and their measured gentle censure of the conduct of Orangemen. I have heard of an editor of a paper, whose former political opinions are at variance with his present conduct, and who excuses his apostacy by comparing himself to a spade, which his employers had a right to use for their emolument. A man may honestly and honourably sell his manual labour, and identify himself for the time being with his instrument, by hiring himself literally to till the ground; but base must he be, if any inducement causes him to sell his intellectual powers, and degrade

himself into a machine to propagate sentiments which his heart condemns.

In the latter part of your last Magazine, I find another letter signed "An Observer." I suppose he is the same correspondent, for a similar claim to impartiality without deserving it, runs through his account of the late melancholy affair at Kilkeel. He states that the Catholics were supposed to be organized; but omits to state that the Orange yeomen were also banded in an illegal association. He, or his informant, says nothing of the subsequent proceedings of the next day. Is this the impartiality of a correct relater of facts? Suppression is often as much opposed to the interests of truth, as direct falsification. In giving evidence, it is as important to tell the whole truth, as to declare nothing but the truth.

Observer "wishes to see the press emancipated from every degree of corrupt influence, let it arise from what quarter it may." He desires good principles in the conductors of the press, and adds, that "the dogmas of a party should be no guide to an editor; his mind should be free to commend what is good, and to reprobate what is bad." We agree in general principles, but I totally differ from him in the application of them. He wishes to confound moderation with a secret bias to one side. This destroys his claim to impartiality, which, when strictly analyzed, if he will pardon an intentional fall, will be found to be all on one side.

STRAIGHT FORWARD.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine,

THIS is a new era for affording instruction to the poorer classes

of society. I rejoice in it, provided this useful direction of public opinion is lasting, and does not like other fashions of the day, pass away without leaving many useful traces behind. I sometimes fear that some new whim will seize the ever changing and unsettled popular mind, and that many who have warmly entered for a time on the business, will grow tired, and being disappointed in their enthusiastic views on the subject, will proportionably cool, and from overheated zeal, will sink into indifference and disgust, because all their eager visions of immediate advantages have not been realised. The work of instruction must necessarily be slow, and perseverance long continued, can only be rationally expected to be crowned with success. The experienced farmer carefully awaits the due season between the sowing of the seed, and the reaping of the harvest, and does not foolishly anticipate the course of the seasons. Although as much good may not immediately appear from instructing the poor as some may have expected, yet still important benefits have arisen from the exertions which have been made. My aim is not to discourage, but to incite to steady perseverance.

But with all my zeal in the cause of instruction, I occasionally espy defects in some very benevolent plans to promote it. I perceive in some publications intended as reading books for this class of society, the introduction of poetical thoughts, and a slang language not well calculated to improve. In a book of this kind with which I lately met, I found a sentiment put into the mouth of one of the speakers as a proverbial incitement to industry, and a weak attempt to shew the powers we possess of accumulation, that we have only one mouth to